

REMARKS

The Examiner, in paragraph 2 of the Office Action, rejected claims 4, 5, and 7 as being indefinite, because they depended from “claim 0”. The Examiner noted that he interpreted these claims as though they depended from claim 1. Claims 4, 5, and 7 depended from “claim 0” due to an apparent word processing error, and the Examiner correctly interpreted them as though they depended from claim 1. Claims 4, 5, and 7 have each been amended to depend from claim 1, and it is believed that this resolves the rejection of claims 4, 5, and 7.

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, the examiner objected to the drawings as not showing the embodiment in which the tongue and removable extension were cylindrical and indicated that the drawings must either show the cylindrical feature or the features cancelled from claims 14 and 28. Claims 14 and 28 have been cancelled, and it is believed that their cancellation resolves this objection.

In paragraph 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-12, 15-25, and 29 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by *De Roule et al.* U.S. Patent 5,580,076. The Examiner noted that *DeRoule et al.* discloses, among other things, a trailer tongue 100, a tubular extension 160 having a mating end structured and arranged to slip fit into the open end of the of the trailer tongue, a first electrical connector 180 disposed within the trailer tongue channel, a second electrical connector 200 disposed within the removable extension; wherein the first and second electrical connectors engage and disengage as the removable extension is installed or removed from the trailer tongue; a trailer electrical harness 260 connected to the first electrical connector; and a towing vehicle electrical harness 280 connected to the second electrical connector.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's conclusion that *De Roule et al.* anticipates claims 1 and 17. Applicant first notes that the trailer tongue in *De Roule et al.* is part A, not part 100. See Fig. 1 and Col. 6, line 56. Part 100 is a receiving system that is attached to the towing vehicle. Col. 6, lines 30-32. The receiving system 100 includes a receiving tube 105. The trailer tongue A is connected to a head assembly D that includes a tapered shank 160. Col. 6, lines 59-62. Shank 160 is received by the receiving tube 105 of receiving system 100. See Col 6, lines 37-42; Col. 8, lines 9-12; and Figs. 5-7. Thus, in *De Roule et al.*, the receiver 100 is attached to the towing vehicle,

the head assembly shank 160 is connected to the receiver, and the head assembly D is connected to the trailer tongue A via a conventional ball hitch. As a consequence, the towing vehicle must either be altered to accommodate the receiver 100, or the receiver 100 must be secured to the towing vehicle in a manner not described in *De Roule et al.*

Claims 1 and 17 each claim an extension for the tongue of the trailer, not a receiver and head assembly for attachment to the forward end of the trailer tongue and the towing vehicle, respectively, as in *De Roule et al.*. Applicant's invention does not require any alteration to the connection to the towing vehicle. In applicant's invention, the trailer tongue extension may be removed from the towing vehicle with the trailer; in *De Roule et al.* the unhitching of the trailer still leaves both the receiver and the head assembly attached to the towing vehicle. The mating of the electrical connectors in *De Roule et al.* occurs between the towing vehicle and the forward end of the trailer hitch, whereas such mating occurs between the trailer tongue and extension in applicant's invention. *DeRoule et al* does not suggest or teach such a mating arrangement. *DeRoule et al* requires alteration of the towing vehicle connection; Applicant's invention does not.

Indeed, *DeRoule et al*, neither shows nor suggests the use of a tubular trailer tongue or tongue extension, extension as shown in applicant's disclosure and claimed in claims 1 and 17. The installation of mating electrical connectors in the trailer tongue itself is not possible in the *DeRoule et al* trailer, because it does not use, disclose, or suggest a trailer tongue with an internal channel, or a removable trailer tongue extension that is or can be installed in a trailer tongue.

Finally, the *DeRoule et al* structure does not provide the protection from unauthorized users provided by Applicant's invention. The *DeRoule et al.* trailer can be removed from the receiver/head assembly by an unauthorized user. Or if the trailer is already separated from the receiver/head assembly, an unauthorized user can connect it to a towing vehicle and convert it to his or her own use. In applicant's invention, the trailer extension protects against unauthorized users in the ways disclosed in the application.

Thus, although both *DeRoule et al* and the instant invention disclose mating electrical connections related to trailers and tow vehicles, applicant's invention does so in a way not disclosed or suggested in *DeRoule et al.* – i.e., in applicant's invention, the connection is made entirely within the trailer tongue and extension, yielding the

advantages reference above and in the application. In *DeRoule et al.* the mating takes place between a receiver and a head block, both of which are forward of the trailer hitch and require a separate attachment structure on the tow vehicle. *DeRoule et al.* neither discloses or suggests the structure of applicant's invention.

Thus, applicant submits that claims 1 and 17 are not anticipated by *DeRoule et al.* and should be allowed.

Rejected claims 4-12, 15, 16, 18-25, and 29 depend from Claims 1 and 17 and applicant submits that, since claims 1 and 17 are allowable, then the dependant claims are also allowable.

In paragraph 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 2-3, 13-14, 26-28, and 30-31 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but stated that such claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and is presented as new independent claim 32.

Claim 3 has been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and is presented as new independent claim 33.

Claim 13 has been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and is presented as new independent claim 34.

Claims 14 has been cancelled, which it is believed moots the objection to it.

Claim 26 has been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and is presented as new independent claim 35.

Claim 27 has been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and is presented as new independent claim 36.

Claim 28 has been cancelled, which it is believed moots the objection to it.


Claims 30 and 31 have been rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1 and are presented as new independent claim 37.

Applicants hereby authorize the required \$50 fee for two additional claims and \$500 fee for five new independent claims be charged to Deposit Account No. 12-0600. It is believed that no further fees are due in connection with this amendment. If any additional fee is due, please charge Deposit Account No. 12-0600.

In view of the above, applicant requests allowance of the claims not above cancelled and asks that this application pass to issue.

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